



**BOURKE  
SHIRE  
COUNCIL**

## “From the General Manager’s Desk” 1 September 2022”

### **Bourke Weir**

With all the water that has flowed past Bourke in the Darling River this year to date, and with the high level of water that is expected to continue to flow for much of the remainder of this year, it is easy to forget the very ordinary water situation that Bourke experienced during the drought of the last decade. Stagnant water, dead fish, Bourke’s most popular tourist attraction, the Jandra Paddle boat, resting on the sandy base of a dry Darling River and a desolate townscape bereft of green grass, or any grass for that matter. In 2019, it was identified that the Bourke township was at a “very high risk” of running out of water. It was reported that Bourke was cited as being at the highest risk among large towns because of the shrinking weir pool on the Darling River. These conditions seem a long time ago and whilst all is good with the River at this point, as every day passes, undoubtedly as a community we are a day closer to a return to drought conditions.

Council has received significant funding from the NSW Government towards the drought proofing of Bourke in respect of the drilling of emergency bores and the redevelopment of the water treatment plant. The situation however regarding the capacity of the Bourke Weir Pool continues to remain unchecked. As it currently stands, when water ceases to flow over the Bourke Weir, and based on no further inflows, as is the case during drought periods, the Weir Pool only has a capacity of 6 month’s supply of water for the town. Once water ceases to flow across the weir, water restrictions commence in Bourke as per Councils Drought Management Plan. To this end, Council has been focused on seeking to see upgrades take place at the Bourke Weir. Council was encouraged by the announcements by the NSW Government in October 2021 that the Bourke Weir would be reconfigured with a new fishway and a low-level outlet for more flexible operation being included, as part of the State Governments, Better Baaka Program. Further briefings revealed that the next phase of bringing these upgrades to reality was the completion by Government of a Final Business Case.

At the August 2022 Council Meeting, it is fair to say that all in attendance were disappointed to learn from Water Infrastructure NSW that it had not been able to achieve any funding either through the NSW Budget or through any Federal Government avenues to progress the upgrade of the weir. Council fully understands that in respect of the potential funding from the Federal Government, the matter has been effected by the change of Government at the federal level, and it obviously takes time for the new Government to set itself up, understand the budget position that it has inherited and also understand its priorities, however this situation has stopped any progress in respect of the preparation of the final business case for the Bourke Weir project.

As a result of this latest funding advice, Council resolved to write to the Hon Tanya Plibersek, MP, Federal Minister for the Environment and Water and the Hon Kevin Anderson, MP, State Minister for Lands and Water, seeking support and funding to progress the next stage of the Western Weirs Strategy being the final business case for the proposed upgrading of the Bourke Weir to improve town water supply security. In writing to both Minister Plibersek and Minister Anderson on the matter, Mayor Barry invited both Ministers to visit Bourke and view the weir and the community’s other drought proofing initiatives.

## **Bowls News**

There was a heightened level of excitement in the Council offices last week with staff member Jenelle Hambrook advising that she and seven (7) fellow bowls associates had progressed to the 3<sup>rd</sup> round of the Grade 4 Ladies Zone Bowls Pennants to be played in Mudgee during October 2022.

Comprising 2 teams of 4 bowlers each, the teams play 21 ends each with the team with the most points “winning the board”. In the 1<sup>st</sup> round of the Pennants, which was held at the Bourke Club back on Sunday 7 August 2022, the Bourke Ladies defeated Dubbo in both games, winning 55-15 overall. Jenelle assured me this was a massive achievement going into 2<sup>nd</sup> round with a 5-0 lead. On Saturday 20 August 2022, the Ladies were on the road travelling for the return match against Dubbo. Bourke again defeated Dubbo in both games winning 49-40. These results mean that the final overall board score was 10-0 to Bourke. Best wishes are extended to the Ladies for their ongoing success.

## **COVID Vaccinations**

Wednesday 24 and 31 August 2022 saw the Western NSW Local Health District deliver two (2) pop-up Flu and COVID-19 vaccination clinics in Bourke. The good news is that a further clinic will be held next Wednesday 7 September 2022 at the Bourke Men’s Hub, Meek Street, Bourke from 10am -4pm. The clinic will be offering both Flu and COVID-19 vaccinations to anyone eligible, as well as light refreshments. You don’t need an appointment to attend, simply walk in, get your shots and have a light refreshment before leaving. These clinics have been aimed at helping our Aboriginal community members access vaccination, however anyone is welcome to attend. You can’t attend the clinics if you are waiting on a COVID-19 test result, if you have recently tested positive for COVID-19 on a PCR or Rapid Antigen Test (current ATAGI advice recommends waiting 3 months after a COVID infection to receive your vaccination), or if you are unwell. Anyone with COVID symptoms should get tested & isolate until they receive a negative test result.

This is a fantastic service by the Western NSW Local Health District to all in our community and I thank the LHD for their endeavours to keep us well. For more information about the clinics, or eligibility for the vaccines, call Alice on 0438 143 808.

## **Volunteer Grants**

The Federal Government has announced that applications for Volunteer Grants of between \$1,000 and \$5,000 to help community groups pay for equipment or for promotional activities that increase participation in volunteering, as well as reimburse fuel costs and expenses associated with transport and training are available. The Volunteer Grants Activity is an element of the Federal Governments Families and Communities Program, which aims to strengthen relationships, support families, improve wellbeing of children and young people, reduce the cost of family breakdown and strengthen family and community functioning. The objectives of the Grant Program are to help community organisations to support the efforts of Australia’s volunteers; help community organisations to support the inclusion of vulnerable people through volunteering and encourage, support and increase participation in volunteering. The closing date for applications is ultimately 5 December 2022 and whilst that sounds a while away, the process involves the submission of an expression of interest to your local Federal Member of Parliament. For us in Bourke that’s an EOI to Mark Coulton MP. Full details are available at <https://www.markcoulton.com.au/volunteer-groups-encouraged-to-apply-for-grants/>

## **Change of Meeting Date**

Due to a clash of dates between the previously determined date for Councils October 2022 meeting and the Annual Conference of Local Government NSW, Council has determined that the date of the October 2022 meeting is now Monday, 31 October 2022.

## **Ronny Gibb's 7's**

After a hiatus of two (2) year's due to COVID restrictions, the staging of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Ronny Gibb's 7's Gala Rugby League and Netball event was celebrated in style on Wednesday 24 August 2022 followed by a fundraising dinner at the Bourke Bowling Club that evening.

One of the visitors to Bourke for the celebrations was rugby league commentator and former player, Darryl Brohman OAM. Councils Manager Environmental Services, Dwayne Willoughby, advised me that Darryl is better known as "the big marn" and with that, I knew exactly who he was talking about! A very funny man. Interestingly, Dwayne told me that Daryl became an instant fan of a Bourke Mocky Chicken Leg upon his first taste, and more than happy to go back for more Mocky's. Other visitors for the event included former players Jamie Lyon, Nathan Blacklock, Jeff Hardy and Scott Meanie, who is the nephew of the late Percy Hobson.

Ronny Gibbs, as a former Bourke resident, is to be both congratulated and thanked for what he has done for sport in our town and the wider region, both during his playing career and beyond.

### **Quote:**

**"Unfortunately, my news today is not very positive in terms of Bourke Shire Council. We haven't been able to achieve any funding....."** A representative from Water Infrastructure NSW addressing Council's August 2022 meeting regarding funding, or the lack thereof, to undertake the Final Business Case in respect of the upgrading of the Bourke Weir.